

# Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 25 August 2024 - The Thirteenth Sunday of Trinity

**Lectionary Readings** (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Joshua 24.1-2a and 14-18, Psalm 34.15-22; Ephesians 6.10-20; John 6.56-69

## Homily

**Today's homily has been written by Amanda Tuck, LLM in the Orwell Group Benefice**

**Hard Teaching!** John 6.56-69

***“He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” (John 6:31) “Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever” (John 6:59)***

We have all put things on the “too difficult” pile, haven't we? Let's face it, there are many enormous world issues right now which fall into **that** category.

Instead of confronting them, we shelve them. Leave them for another day. Leave them for cleverer people to deal with.

I have certainly done this. In fact, my theological **too difficult** pile sometimes topples over with the weight of too much, too many hard ideas to balance, think about, to work on.

What Jesus was talking about in Capernaum in the synagogue in today's John 6 reading was huge. This discourse made a huge dent in our world view, in the faith of those who heard it. The meaning of what Jesus was saying left them, and us, simply all of a heap.

**This passage from John is saying that our loving God gives us bread from heaven. Through his son, Jesus, God gives us of himself. Jesus was and is his body and his blood. We recall the mystery of faith in our Eucharist. By taking this real and sacred food into us, a loving Jesus gives us, as real believers, absolutely everything. He saves us.**

In John's Gospel nothing is included by accident. It was written by someone who knew Jesus well. John had thought and prayed about what he had learnt from every angle, including ancient references.

Jesus is today heard echoing and amplifying an ancient idea, a dramatic incident. Building on ideas from Hebrew scriptures.

Jesus references King David, no less. David, a hero who Jesus's contemporaries would have known from childhood. David the shepherd, David the warrior.

The same thirsty David, who in the Hebrew Bible <sup>1</sup>refused to “drink the blood” of his comrades when they had risked their lives to fetch **water** during a battle with enemy Philistines. David then wouldn’t drink it; pouring it away, valuable water brought from a Bethlehem well across enemy lines.

Why? David was considerate of his comrades’ death for him. He also did not wish to break Jewish food laws of butchering where no blood must remain in the animal to be eaten. David did not drink blood.

But here, in today’s reading, we hear Jesus asking his followers to do just that. To faithfully accept the Spirit through sharing Jesus’s own body and blood.

This idea of Jesus as food and drink is the origin, the institution of Holy Communion, echoing the Last Supper.

Communion, symbolising a oneness, a togetherness, being a foretaste of the moment when we will be at one with God. The bread and wine not just taken as a significant memorial of Jesus, but as a symbol of so much more. Only to be taken in community in faithful remembrance that Jesus died and rose again for us.

People at the time heard Jesus explain this and, understandably, they were profoundly puzzled. They were wondering- *How can Jesus give us his own flesh to eat? What does that mean?*

Theologians have been thinking, writing, arguing, interpreting this area of Christian belief for centuries. Why? Because this mystery sits right at the heart of our faith.

### Pause

There is something a bit off-putting about the notion of Jesus’s body and blood being given to us to eat.

Apart from overtones of cannibalism, (!) Jewish food laws forbade eating flesh with visible blood. <sup>2</sup>Blood was thought to contain an animal’s life force.

However, Jesus is saying that **his** body and blood, **his** bread of heaven is to be shared with us. He continues to give us everything he is, everything he has, because he loves us. It is a very intimate act.

The idea Jesus outlined to his hearers was so difficult, so hard to contemplate, so outrageous that some simply refused to think about it. They put it on their “**too difficult pile**” and resolved to make sure to be away next time Jesus came near.

Some people today take a similar view.

Body and Blood of Jesus. It has challenging theological implications.

- Some early Christians just could not accept that Jesus came into the world as God made flesh in human form.

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<sup>1</sup> (2 Samuel 23:17, 1 Chronicles 11:19)

<sup>2</sup> (Leviticus 17:10-14).

- Others saw Jesus as the Word and Wisdom of God but could not accept this profoundly sacramental form. A Word Made flesh in the Eucharist.

What Jesus says comes a bit close to the bone for listeners.

BUT John's Gospel amplifies his central message about the WORD becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us. Not the WORD becoming an **idea**, or a **book**, or a **statue**, but the word becoming **living breathing flesh which still, even now through people who believe, is living amongst people.**

Ideas to wonder, ponder and meditate about.

Maybe worth taking off that **too difficult** pile for a while.

Jesus being the Son of God. Someone equally at home as human, dwelling both in heaven and on earth. Jesus, a citizen of both realms.

Jesus, the Word made Flesh.

Jesus's body present in the Eucharist, the place where mystically, the Word, the Spirit of God, becomes present. In the sacred place where our spiritual life and our faith has ultimate meaning.

Jesus is urging his hearers to go beyond simple knowledge about eating and drinking. He is inviting deeper understanding about human sustenance. He invites a usually hidden dimension to seep into our consciousness.

The twelve disciples in our passage, including Judas (who was to betray Jesus), stand firm as representatives of faith and belief in Jesus. They all recognise him and know what he is for them.

It was personal for them.

It is personal for us as well.

The Disciples gradually understood that, through their friend Jesus, their entire world would change.

The God- given Manna in the wilderness could not stop the Israelites from dying. But, with his bread of life Jesus gives us, if we have faith, we are offered a firm and solid union with Him. We can take life into ourselves. <sup>3</sup>

Those who eat the true bread from heaven quite simply consume the bread of life in Jesus. That is not difficult. **They** will live in Jesus forever, <sup>4</sup>and he in us.

**Amen.**

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<sup>3</sup> John (6:57)

<sup>4</sup> John (6:58)

## All Age Activity

Begin by asking, I wonder what the listeners thought about when Jesus talked about bread from heaven? I wonder what the people thought when Jesus said that he was the bread of life?

***Jesus said that in the wilderness God gave the people bread to eat, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” (John 6:31) Then Jesus talked about himself as the bread of life, “Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever” (John 6:59)***

There are lots of difficult things to think about in the passage. It is tempting to put things on the “too difficult” pile. Let’s face it, there are many enormous world issues right now which fall into **that** category.

Instead of confronting them, we shelve them. Leave them for another day. Leave them for cleverer people to deal with.

Sometimes the ‘too difficult pile’ topples over with the weight of too much, too many hard ideas to balance, think about, to work on.

Ask children/ people to pile up wooden bricks on which you have put sticky labels with words as below and comment as each is placed on a pile- Bread, (*Yes, we all love the smell of fresh bread*) Wine, (*red wine or white, maybe rose. This is a symbol of Jesus Blood after all*) Holy Communion, (*Yes, that usually happens here*) Jesus as human, (etc)The WORD, God, Body, Blood, Faith, Belief, Church, Eucharist, Mystery, Holy Spirit, Questions, Jesus, Judas, Community, Church, Me etc Inevitably bricks, piled upon each other, will fall. Maybe ask younger people to make a better construction for you, one that doesn’t fall. They will inevitably place bricks with words like bread and wine together, Jesus and Body, faith and Belief etc. All ideas to play with. This could be the central homily.

What Jesus was talking about in Capernaum in the synagogue in today’s John 6 reading was huge. This discourse made a huge dent in our world view, in the faith of those who heard it. The meaning of what Jesus was saying left them, and us, simply all of a heap.

**This passage from John is saying that our loving God gives us bread from heaven. Through his son, Jesus, God gives us of himself. Jesus was and is his body and his blood. We recall the mystery of faith in our Eucharist. By taking this real and sacred food into us, a loving Jesus gives us, as real believers, absolutely everything. He saves us.**

## Suggested intercessions

Our Lord Jesus, the Word made Flesh, you have asked us to meet and pray together in community. Here we are today.

We pray here and now for all those who find it hard to live in faith. We think especially of those of us who question and doubt so much that was and is mysterious about your life, your death and your glorious resurrection.

We ask, in Jesus's name, the Grace to discern answers.

Lord, in your Mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for your Church here on earth, and for all those who faithfully minister in our communities, both here and around the world. May our church and community leaders see true greatness as service and true strength as humility.

We ask, in Jesus's name that they, and we feel your loving strength, encouragement and direction.

Lord, in your Mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for ourselves, that we may, as Christians, find the courage to face our own "too difficult" questions of faith. May we take heart when doubts assail us and live out what we profess in this place.

We ask, in Jesus's name, for you to give us true faith and love in all we think and say and do.

Lord, in your Mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who have lost hope while living in challenging situations. We think of those known only to you who are caught up in the terrors of conflict and war. We cannot imagine the distress of living in a societal breakdown. So hard, especially for people of faith. We remember Christians living in your Holy Land and in Ukraine. We pray for peace and reconciliation.

We ask, In Jesus's name that they and their families be comforted and encouraged, feeling some security in your safekeeping.

Lord, in your Mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who have died. We think in a moment of quiet of those we have known. (Pause) today we consider particularly those who had few to mourn their passing. We think of those who have died alone, relatively unnoticed by their communities. May they rest in your peace for ever.

We ask, as in all things, that your will be done.

Lord, in your Mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for your troubled but beautiful world and thank God for all the gifts you give us each day. May our homes be places full of God's love. May we share a renewed sense of care for the environment we live in.

We ask that through your teaching, your example, and in the solemnity of the Eucharist we may open our eyes to your profound truth.

Merciful Father

**Accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.**

**Amen**

### **Suggested hymns/songs**

*Be Still for the presence of the Lord*

*I am the Bread of Life*

*Bread of Heaven, on thee we feed.*

*Jesus, the Broken bread*

*Bread of the World in Mercy Broken*

*Taste and See the Goodness of the Lord*

*Bread is Blessed and Broken*

*O Thou who at thy Eucharist didst pray*

*Out to the great Wide World we go*

### **Activities to accompany the service:**

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>  
(weekly@ lectionary resource)